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## A PAINTER OF PICTURESQUE INTERIORS

By PETER MCARTHUR

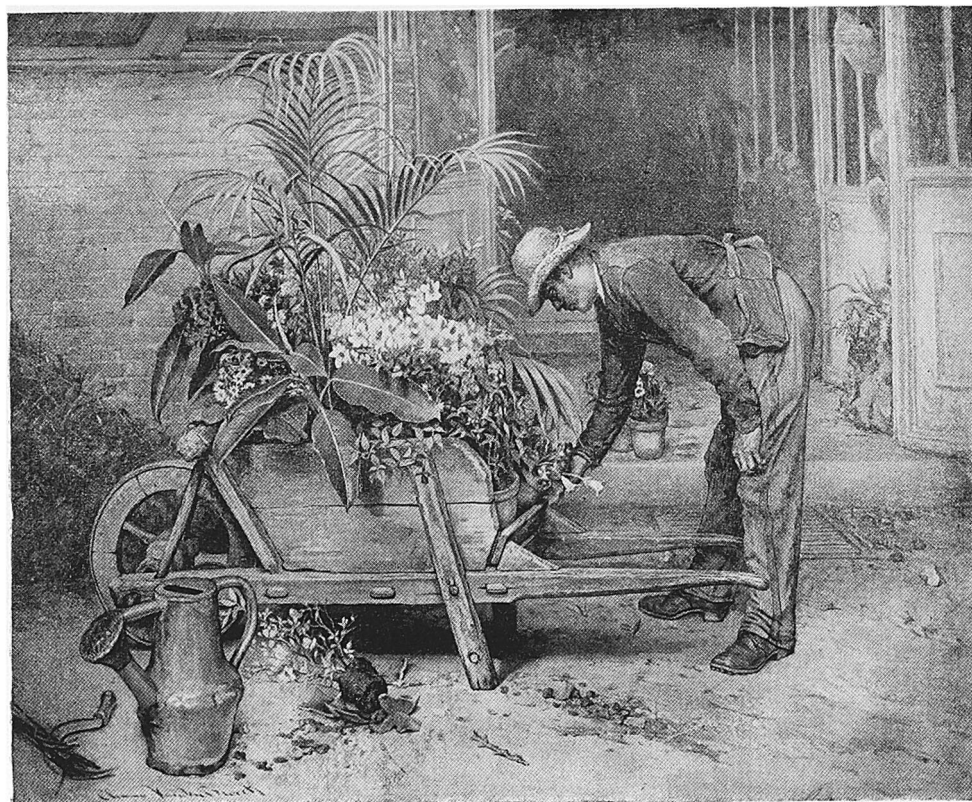
*With original illustrations by Clémence Van den Broeck.*



AN EQUESTRIAN

IN order to realize how far behind Americans are in the matter of interior decorations, it is only necessary to look at the work of our artists. But few of them have found interiors in their own land that are worthy of being used in artistic compositions, and the stray examples they give are odd and unusual rather than beautiful on account of architectural design and tasteful finish. The first impulse in this country was to make buildings satisfy all the demands of utility, later the matter of outward display was considered, and during the past few years some attention has been devoted to the artistic treatment of the inner walls and ceilings.

In older countries all these stages were passed through many centuries ago, with the result that they abound in buildings, from palaces down to peasants' cottages, that appeal to the artist from every point of view.



THE GARDENER

One is forcibly reminded of this on seeing the paintings of Clémence Van den Broeck, the Flemish artist, at present resident in Canada, whose work has won many honors both in this country and in Europe. Her pictures owe much of their charm to the finished interiors, replete with architectural beauties and ornaments of antiquarian interest, in which her figures are posed. The dim, shadowy chapels, with their wonderful windows; the palace-walls with their priceless tapestries, and panels hung with the trophies of war; the garniture of the feudal banquetting-boards, the massive, deeply carved furniture, are all to be seen on her canvases; and, though they may at times distract the attention of the observer from the figures in her compositions, they are treated with such artistic feeling that the eye invariably dwells upon them with pleasure.

Though Miss Van den Broeck's productions so often invite us to scenes of by-gone pomp and magnificence, with their rich coloring and bewildering profusion of details, her work in lowlier spheres is of equal if not greater interest.



A FLEMISH KITCHEN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Her "Flemish Kitchen of the 16th Century" was exhibited at the Centennial Exposition, and attracted much favorable attention. The exceptional fidelity to detail that characterizes it makes it of interest to the student as well as to the connoisseur. The old fire-place, the curiously glazed windows, the heavy furniture, and the cumbersome utensils, all lend themselves naturally to artistic treatment,



THE ORATORY AT WESTERLOO

and one cannot help speculating on what would be the feelings of a devotee of ceramic ware who should by accident stumble on such a kitchen as this, so richly stocked with quaintly wrought pottery. In this country the artist would seek in vain for such material, just as he would for the tapestried rooms that are the result of the culture of ages. And even though he might find interiors of beautiful design in the homes of some millionaires, most of them would smell of varnish. Of course it is folly to complain of a lack that can only be supplied by the lapse of



time and the good taste bred of esthetic leisure; and perhaps it would be better to cultivate a spirit of temperate thankfulness for what has already been accomplished.

The tendency in this country, at present, undoubtedly, is to make homes something more than boxes, sometimes ornamental, but usually of democratic severity; and everything should be done to encourage it. But the great reason why costly houses often seem to us garish, is found in the fact that there is little unity of design in their decorations. The wealthy owner gives the mason, the glazier, the furnisher, the plumber, the decorator, the gas-fitter, the electrician, and everyone else who



IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

to the owner, who pays his bills and invites his friends to come and gaze on his magnificence. This cannot go on forever, and already some buildings have been erected that have been carefully overlooked in every detail by competent architects, who ordered the arrangement of everything, even to the bric-à-brac. The result cannot help attracting the attention of at least the second generation of plutocrats, and perhaps the artists of the future may not need to go abroad for settings worthy of their compositions. Perhaps, also, by that time, some of the more gorgeous residences may have been allowed to fall into ruins, and in that way to acquire a beauty that in their present



A DUTCH CAVALIER

applies to him, *carte blanche* to do his utmost with the palace he is building, and each forthwith does all in his power to make his work outshine everything else. The result is usually appalling, though showy and probably satisfying



OLD FAIENCE

form they hardly suggest to the cultivated eye and mind.

In 1885 Miss Van den Broeck spent several months at Bôna, in Algeria, where, through the kindness of Said Ben Ramdan, an Arab chief, she was permitted to make a painting of the interior of the local mosque, with a number of figures posed in the various attitudes of worship. This work was afterwards purchased by the Belgian government and given an honorable position in the national art-gallery. During this trip she made a number of interesting sketches of the natives, who had to be bribed



and coaxed into posing for her, as having portraits taken is against the teachings of the Koran. One of the most striking of these productions is a picture of Said Ben Ramdan as a commander of the Legion of Honor.

Since moving to Canada in 1891, on account of her health, she has found several subjects worthy of her brush. Of course they are vastly different from the work in which her chief successes were won, though treated with the same vigor and careful technique. She has just completed a series of three pictures, each showing the interior of a Canadian kitchen, with a girl busy at household tasks. The coloring of these canvases is in a rather sombre key, somewhat relieved by baskets of ripe fruit treated with convincing realism.

Miss Van den Broeck was born in Belgium and from her infancy lived in an artistic atmosphere

Her father, Pierre Van den Broeck, was a sculptor of note, who occupied the position of Inspector and Commissioner General of the Fine Arts, under the Belgian government. From her infancy her studies were directed towards art, for which she showed a precocious aptitude. She received her first instruction from Adolph Dilleue, the Flemish master, and had the honor of being his only pupil. Until the death of her father, when she was about twenty years of age, she was his constant companion, going with him to the studios and cafés, and spending all her spare time among his artist-friends. In this way she became thoroughly imbued with the artistic

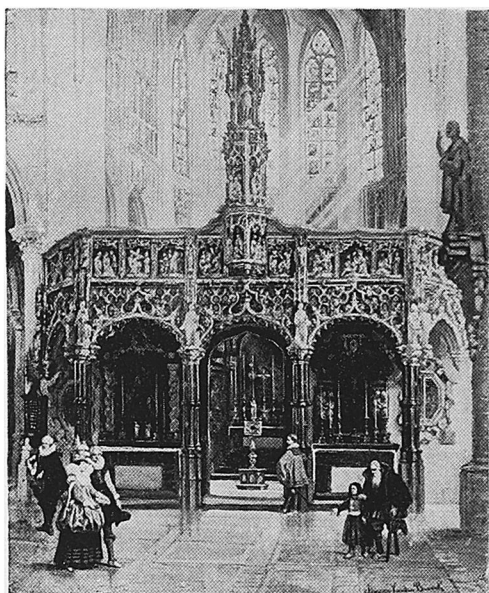


spirit, and made the most of her opportunities. She studied with unremitting earnestness, and after her father's death moved to Paris, where she applied herself to her vocation with the enthusiasm that cannot fail to win success. During the twelve years she spent in the French capital her paintings were exhibited at the Salon, and were hung at the universal exhibitions at Brussels, Antwerp, Lyons, Paris, London and Philadelphia, where they attracted considerable attention and received many awards. At London her works won two medals presented by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales. When she visited Paris in '94 she was elected a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences by the French government, and decorated with the Order of the Palms.

Besides doing such pleasing work with interiors she has done landscapes of merit, and her portraiture has been invariably successful. Her most recent canvas pictures a girl seated at an old-fashioned spinning-wheel such as may still be found in some Canadian farmhouses. This painting, however, deals with the time when spinning was an occupation not beneath the dignity of fine ladies. A wealth of color is supplied by a window banked with flowers, from which the light falls softly through the lace curtains and foliage over the young lady, who has paused in her work and is indulging in "idle thoughts."



A CONNOISSEUR OF POTTERY



THE ALTAR-SCREEN

is necessarily absent, but the flowers and curtains are so arranged that an unpromising interior is made artistically attractive.

As Miss Van den Broeck takes a deep interest in the life by which she is surrounded, it is very probable that her sojourn in Canada will be productive of many valuable specimens of her art. She has already made some sketches of snow-shoeing and tobogganing scenes, finding in the old and sometimes outlandish costumes of those sports abundant material for pleasing compositions. The life and customs of a new land, however, are usually vigorous and stirring rather than graceful, and more likely to appeal to a delineator of dramatic events than to one whose work has chiefly been laid in scenes of quiet refinement.



*Drawn by Woldemar Friederich*

THE WILD HUNTSMAN—I. THE BISHOP'S LETTER

This is a Teutonic legend of the Middle Ages. Count Hackelberend is forbidden by the bishop to hunt on Sundays or holy days, but insists upon doing so, in spite of the entreaties of his nephew Albrecht and his daughter Wulfhild.